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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2508

INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA IMMEDIATE 3656

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA IMMEDIATE 5994

RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE IMMEDIATE 7458

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 000938

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/J, NEA/IRAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/21/2019

TAGS: PREL JA IR

SUBJECT: FM NAKASONE TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH MAY 2 IRAN VISIT

Classified By: A/DCM Ron Post, reasons 1.5(b),(d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Japan understands U.S. concerns over plans for FM Nakasone to travel to Iran on May 2, but is committed to going ahead with the visit, Middle East DG Suzuki informed the Charge on April 22. Suzuki assured the Charge that Nakasone will do nothing to undermine the current international sanctions policy during his talks in Tehran, and repeated Japan's offer for Nakasone to convey any messages on behalf of the United States. Charge reaffirmed the U.S. position opposing the visit, but promised to convey Suzuki's offer to Washington. Suzuki noted that the only deliverable for the visit is expected to be an announcement regarding the specifics of Japan-Iran cooperation on assistance to Afghanistan. The Israeli Embassy has indicated that their Ambassador plans to make the case for cancelling the visit to Suzuki later in the day. End Summary.

¶2. (C) MOFA Director General for Middle Eastern and African Affairs Toshiro Suzuki requested a meeting with the Charge on April 22 to follow up on points raised during Ambassador Ichiro Fujisaki's April 21 discussions with Deputy Secretary James Steinberg and Special Advisor Dennis Ross. Noting that he had spoken with Fujisaki directly the night before, he reiterated the point that Japan has decided to proceed with a trip by Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone to Iran on May 2, "within the context of our normal diplomatic relationship." He said the offer to convey any particular messages on behalf of the United States remains open.

¶3. (C) Japan is aware of U.S. concerns over the timing of the Nakasone visit with respect to the sentencing of Roxana Saberi and the "deplorable" comments of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad before the UN Conference on Racism in Geneva, Suzuki noted, but is ready to "tell Iran what we need to tell them." Nakasone's conversations in Iran are expected to cover a broad range of bilateral and regional concerns, including Iran's nuclear development, but he will also use the visit to urge Iran to "act more responsibly" if it hopes to build the trust of the international community. Nakasone has already raised the Saberi case with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, he said, but will continue to pursue the issue.

¶4. (C) Suzuki assured the Charge that Nakasone will say nothing in Tehran to undermine the current, multilateral sanctions approach. The only "deliverable" for the visit will be a more concrete announcement of Japan-Iran cooperation on assistance to Afghanistan, which was previewed in March during the pledging conference at The Hague. The plan will call for joint assistance in the areas of border control, with an emphasis on narcotics trafficking and

refugee assistance.

¶ 15. (C) At the same time, Japan is eager to be supportive of the new U.S. policy of diplomatic engagement with Iran, Suzuki stated. He urged the United States to consider not only Iran's negative actions, but also the more subtle positive messages, including Ahmadinejad's ambiguous statement regarding Saberi and the dispatch of Foreign Minister Mottaki to the Friends of Pakistan conference in Tokyo. The Charge reminded Suzuki that Secretary Clinton, in discussing the review of U.S. Iran policy with Prime Minister Taro Aso, had made the point that regardless of what progress is made on engagement, the sanctions portion of U.S. policy will not change right away.

¶ 16. (C) The Charge acknowledged Japan's continued willingness to carry messages to Iran and promised to convey that standing offer to Washington. At the same time, he noted, Japan already has a good understanding of U.S. concerns with respect to Iran. Suzuki indicated that there is still time for the U.S. to change its mind, given that the visit will not be officially announced until much closer to the travel date. Either way, Suzuki promised to provide detailed readouts, both in Washington and in Tokyo, after the visit.

¶ 17. (C) Separately, Embassy Tokyo learned from the Israeli Embassy later in the day that their Ambassador, who is seeing Suzuki on other business, also plans to make the case for cancelling the Nakasone visit, after hearing about Ambassador Fujisaki's discussions from the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

ZUMWALT